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SENATE FINANCE AND CLAIMS COMMITTEE  
INFORMATIONAL TESTIMONY  
CHARLIE BRIGGS, MACDS, MAR  
HB 820 – PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
MARCH 30, 2007

I am Charlie Briggs, here on behalf of the Montana Association of Community Disability Services and the Montana Association for Rehabilitation. This represents nearly 50 community agencies in Montana. I intend to speak briefly concerning Disability Services Division, DPHHS, funding in HB 820, as amended.

Our membership has not encouraged service recipients or their families to attend and offer testimony at this time. In January, the joint sub-committee heard more than three hours of public testimony from some 30 citizens regarding vocational rehabilitation, independent living and related services. Another 40-plus offered testimony about child and adult developmental disability services. Probably at least another 50 either didn't testify – or submitted their comments only in writing – as the time ran short.

The strongest testament for disability funding is frankly the non-partisan support of all members of the sub-committee:

- Vice-Chair Sen. Weinberg, joined by Sens. Cobb and Lind, continuously demonstrated very unified efforts in assessing needs;
- The Chair, Rep. Clark, who was clear and resolute in her commitment to find balance among all the requests and needs;
- Rep. Morgan, who has demonstrated an unflinching advocacy on behalf of people who are at-risk; and
- Rep. Jayne, was actually the one vote that differed from the others on occasion, when she was convinced more funding was needed
- For all of them, providers, consumers, family members and advocates hold them in great respect and appreciation. People felt they were truly heard by the committee.

I am here to say that we support the sub-committee funding recommendations and appreciate that this committee has used that as the starting point for completing this budget, both for rehabilitative services and community programs for people with developmental disabilities. This is especially important because of the service rate redesign currently being implemented.

There are a few amendments that will be coming that address some issues still needing to be fixed:

- Removing the OTO from funding for the DD waiting list (this will be explained when the amendment comes)
- The sub-committee reduced the funding for the waiting list by 75% of what the Governor requested – we believe that was too extreme and hope the committee restores some of that funding

Finally, Madame Chair, I want to remind you and members of the committee that the effectiveness of developmental disabilities services and vocational rehabilitation programs in Montana really demonstrate so much success in peoples lives – promoting independence, choices; specialized training and placement in employment citizens with special needs so that they can be wage earners living with dignity –they can even be taxpayers – and make their way as citizens of communities across our great state.

Thank you for your time and attention to these critical funding issues.